

How to start a

Read & LeadTM

Reading Improvement Program



in your Key Club



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE READ & LEAD™

Reading Improvement Program



Q. What is the Read & Lead Reading Improvement Program?

A. Read & Lead is a one-on-one reading appreciation program conducted by high school students to teach young emerging readers in the early years of elementary school to love and enjoy reading books. The purpose of Read & Lead is to recruit high school students to read age appropriate books to children. The high school mentor provides individualized attention that classroom teachers do not have time to give. The high school reader provides warm support and friendship that enhances their child's sense of confidence, self esteem and love of learning.

Q. Why is it important to read to children?

A. The first step in learning and enjoying reading is to be read to by a loving adult. Every child loves to sit down and be read an age appropriate book by a parent or older brother or sister. You've seen the joy in children's eyes when an older person sits down with them and reads a good book enthusiastically. The child enjoys the attention and love of the reader. In turn, the child begins to associate entertainment with reading books. Being read to by the high school reading friend on a regular basis naturally makes the child want to start reading books for him/herself.

Q. Aren't children being read to at home?

A. Of course, family members read to many children on a regular basis and statistics prove that these children do well in school. However, according to the National Institute for Literacy, "Twenty percent of adult Americans are functionally illiterate. People who are functionally illiterate cannot read well enough to read a story to a child. And the problem is getting worse. An estimated 2.2 million people are added to the illiterate population

every year." In addition, many parents work one and two jobs and do not have the time to read to children when they get home. In most cases, the television is used as a baby-sitter and source of entertainment. The only way these children can break this cycle of illiteracy is through volunteer programs like Read & Lead.

Q. Why are reading skills falling even among children of educated parents?

A. The television is now the major source for news, entertainment and education for most families. Some people see no need to read even the local newspaper. The long-range affect on society is devastating.

Q. Can every child benefit from Read & Lead™?

A. Yes. The old adage says, "Practice makes perfect." With a one-on-one mentor, every child will develop interest in or will improve their reading.

Q. If a child is not having a problem in reading, is it still important to read to him/her on a regular basis?

A. The more a child reads and is read to, the better student he/she becomes. Spending time reading with a child improves his/her love for books. The Read & Lead Program is beneficial to every child, regardless of the child's reading ability.

Q. Why don't the schools provide personal attention?

A. Teachers do not have enough time in the day to provide each student with the personal attention he/she needs. Our teachers are overloaded, and the school systems are under funded. Our teachers welcome help from high school mentors. Volunteers are needed desperately to supplement our teachers' efforts. The elementary students will benefit from more one-on-one reading time that Read & Lead™ mentors provide.

Q. Since I go to school myself, when would I have time to be a Read & Lead reading friend?

A. Today most elementary schools have extended day programs, which are basically after school services for children of working parents. Many of the potential students for Read & Lead participate in this program. This is a perfect opportunity for you to conduct the Read & Lead program. After you get out of school in the afternoon, you can go to the elementary school and meet with your reading friend. The teacher in charge of the extended day program will appreciate your help and will find a quiet place for you to read with your reading friend. If you attend a school that has K-12 grades or if there is an elementary school located close by, you possibly could make arrangements to meet with your reading friend during study hall, lunch or immediately before or after school. Check with your principal or guidance counselor about this.

Q. What is the difference between Read & Lead™ and other book buddy-type programs?

A. Read & Lead is based on the concept of "youth helping youth." Our emphasis is recruiting concerned students, not adults, to be positive mentors and reading partners for the readers who need personal one-on-one attention. If millions of high school students could donate 45 minutes a week or a month helping a child learn to love to read, we could make a big difference in our literacy problem among our children. In addition, small children look up to high school students. They emulate the "big boys and girls." By being a reading friend, a high school student not only can help the elementary school student love reading, but he/she also can be a positive role model.

Q. Why should we start a Read & Lead reading improvement program?

A. The obvious reason is to help in the fight against illiteracy by helping young children learn to enjoy reading. What a great way to show that you care by helping a young child love reading. Teaching children to enjoy reading is a form of "play" that will last a lifetime. It is the type of "play" that will prepare them for the future.

Q. How many members from our club must participate in Read & Lead for us to have an effective program?

A. As few as one or two and as many as possible. The flexibility of Read & Lead makes the project so attractive. It does not take a lot of people participating in order to have an effective Read & Lead Reading Improvement Program. Of course, the more that participate, the more children you can serve. But we know that some teenagers work after school or have other extracurricular activities that may conflict with the Read & Lead™ Program. As people see how much satisfaction the participating teenagers receive from reading to a child, the number of participants will grow. So don't let lack of numbers discourage you.

Get started now!





Q. Why does Read & Lead™ emphasize the high school student reading to the elementary school student rather than vice versa? Shouldn't we be teaching the child to read?

A. Teaching children to read takes training and education that most high school students do not have. Therefore, Read & Lead is involved in the first step in teaching a child to read, which is to be read to. We want to share the joy and entertainment with our young friends by reading age appropriate stories and books to them. However, many times the young students may want to read to you. If an educator is involved in your Read & Lead Program, you should check with him/her to see if it's okay for the child to read to you. But, many times the child responds so well to your encouragement and attention that he/she will insist on reading to you. That's when you know that you are making progress.

Q. Who recommends the books we read to the child?

A. The schoolteacher or librarian will recommend which books to read to the child. Most schools have hundreds of books in the library from which to choose. Also, many church groups use Sunday School curriculum materials that are specifically designed for a particular age group. In addition, age appropriate books can be checked out from your local public library. The librarian will be more than happy to advise you on good books for children.

Q. What does it cost to participate in Read & Lead?

A. Nothing. There is no money to be raised and no money to be spent. The only investment is the time you and your Key Club members invest in the lives of young children.

Q. How much time do I need to invest?

A. One hour per week is recommended. Be sure not to over commit and disappoint a child. He/she will look forward to "story hour" and will be extremely disappointed if you miss. Try making an hour a week commitment. It will be one of the best investments you ever made!

Q. What happens if there is an emergency and I cannot meet with my Read & Lead reading friend?

A. This should be discussed with the sponsoring teacher before the program is started. With the concurrence of the sponsoring teacher, the high school reading friends should have a buddy mentor that can substitute whenever necessary. Otherwise, you and the sponsoring teacher must develop a contingency plan. Absences should be kept to a minimum because they will disappoint your reading friend.

Q. How did Read & Lead get started?

A. My mother was a book buddy at Verner Elementary School in my hometown where my sisters, Jaynie and Kate, and I attended elementary school. I remember my mother telling me about how much her time with her first grade friend meant to her, as well as to the child to whom she read once a week. She still tells the story of one meeting with her reading buddy. The child said, "Mrs. Randall, do you know what I'm going to do this summer? I'm going to pray you'll be my book

buddy next year." My mother never forgot how she was touched by that child and how the child responded to the personal attention.

The story of my mother and her book buddy has become an important chapter in our family's history. When I was elected Lt. Governor of Division III of the Alabama District of Key Club International in the spring of 1997, I made up my mind that our Division was going to do something special during the 1997-98 school year.

During the summer, planning for our Fall Rally, I thought about my Mother's story about her great experience with her book buddy. I remembered that my mom said the problem with adult mentors was the competing time commitments. Suddenly, I thought of what our Division could do: start a book buddy program run by teenagers. Why not tap the vast high school talent pool to provide reading mentors and positive role models for young kids who need reading help?

As I researched the idea more, I discovered the enormity of the illiteracy problem. With each new bit of information on illiteracy and the importance of reading to children, the more I realized that high school students could make a difference. I introduced the idea at Division III's Fall Rally, and the idea took off. A simple brochure was developed and a manual was completed. In a matter of weeks, we went from an idea to a Division project to a multi-district project. The idea of "Youth helping youth for a brighter future" was so compelling that we needed to give it a special name to distinguish our high school program from the old book buddy idea that has been around for ages.



Because we were trying to create a love for books and reading by devel-

oping a mentor relationship between a high school and elementary school student, we felt that the Read & Lead™ Reading Improvement Program told the story. In a short period of time other groups and organizations expressed interest in starting Read & Lead mentoring groups in their communities.

Teenagers started Read & Lead Programs in churches, Boy's and Girl's Clubs and other organizations. Then, in February of 2001, the college division of the Read & Lead Foundation was established. The first college chapter of Read & Lead was formed at Princeton University.

- Q. Do you have to commit to an entire year or can you commit to a shorter period of time?**
- A.** Any amount of reading time is valuable to your reading friend and is very much appreciated. But, the important thing is to have a clear understanding with the student and his teacher or parent or guardian. You do not want to disappoint a child by not living up to your agreement. Any schedule can be worked out with the adult who is supervising your reading partner.
- Q. You have mentioned on several occasions that the high school reading mentor receives as much benefit as the elementary student. What do you mean by this?**
- A.** Every time I complete a reading session with my six-year-old reading friend, I feel like I'm ten feet tall. I've often heard that the Sunday school teacher learns twice as much as the students he/she is teaching. Now I understand why. The Read & Lead experience helps the mentor develop humility, leadership, communication skills, empathy, and a feeling of self-worth. Sharing your time, knowledge, and love with a child through the Read & Lead Program gives you a new, more positive outlook on life. You'll be a better person from mentoring through Read & Lead.

PROCEDURE TO START A READ & LEAD™ PROGRAM



1. Choose a school to conduct the program - In most cases, there will be an elementary school that is close to your school or one with which you have a connection. These are the first schools you should approach to set up your Read & Lead program.
2. If you are a member of a church group, you can conduct the Read & Lead program at your church at times compatible with church services and functions. Read & Lead is a welcome addition to the Sunday School or day care program.
3. If you are conducting your Read & Lead program outside the church or school, you must identify students to mentor and consistent places to conduct your program: home, apartment, civic center, library, Boy's and Girl's Clubs, Boy Scout hut, etc. You also must receive written permission from the parents of the student(s).
4. Contact the elementary school principal, church pastor or parent. Explain that you want to set up a Read & Lead Reading Improvement Program at his/her school or church. Emphasize that the Read & Lead Reading Improvement Program is different from similar programs in that Read & Lead encourages high school students to mentor elementary students. Through focusing on "Youth helping Youth," Read & Lead benefits both the mentor and the elementary school student. Probably the principal will direct you to the librarian, the teacher in charge of the extended day program and/or an interested teacher who will assign a student to you to mentor. In the case of a church, the pastor will refer you to the Sunday school superintendent, day care director or youth leader.
5. If you are conducting Read & Lead as an individual or a part of a civic organization or neighborhood group, always approach the people in charge, especially the parents. Explain the program and get their permission and help.
6. Meet with the librarian or teacher who will assign you a child. Remember, the teacher, school or church representative is the boss. They know from experience and education what is best for their children. You are there to help them by being a positive role model for their students and by giving personal attention to a young student by reading him/her books that you are assigned. Explain that the primary focus of the Read & Lead Reading Improvement Program is "Youth helping Youth" to encourage reading and to make friends through reading.
7. Request that the educator choose an appropriate student for each Read & Lead mentor.
8. Get a list of suggested books from the school or church educator.
9. Ask educator's advice on how to help the student in the most effective way.

10. Ask the educator to introduce you to the student.
11. Set up a definite time and place to meet the student.
12. Preferably meet in the school library where help can be obtained from the librarian.
13. Since most Read & Lead™ mentors are in school themselves, you must be able to meet the elementary school student after your classes are over. Therefore, the choice of the student to mentor must correspond to your school schedule. Today, many schools have the "extended day" program, which means that many children will remain at the elementary school until 5:00 or when their parents get off work.
14. If Read & Lead is being conducted outside of school, then you can develop an appropriate time to fit your circumstances, such as Sundays at church or in the evening in your neighborhood.
15. Time commitment - You should devote 30-60 minutes per week to your student. It is important that you are able to be on time every week. A 60-minute commitment is recommended because young children do not like to be rushed. There will certainly be several minutes of getting to know each other before and after reading starts. Be sure to leave ample time for you to read to your reading friend. Don't get too carried away in your conversation that you don't have time for the main purpose of your visit -- encouraging your student to read books.
16. If your reading friend wants to read, let him/her do so. But, be sure you have gotten permission from the educator or parent in charge. Also, you'll want to get a list of age appropriate books so the material will not be too difficult. We certainly don't want to discourage the child.





READ & LEAD™
Reading Improvement Program



Dear Principal/Pastor,

_____ has adopted the Read & Lead Reading Improvement Program as our service project for the year, and we would like the opportunity to talk to you about conducting this program in your school/church.

In brief, the Read & Lead Program entails Key Clubbers in the 9th-12th grades donating one hour a week reading books and stories to elementary school students who may be having trouble reading. By being a positive role model and sharing our joy of reading, we hope the one-on-one attention will supplement the efforts of your outstanding staff.

Realizing that illiteracy is a problem for all of us, we would like to help your teachers by giving one-on-one attention to some of your students that would benefit from this personal contact.

I'll call you in a day or two to set up an appointment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Telephone call to set up an appointment with Elementary School Principal or Church Pastor

School/Church: (Phone rings) "Hello, _____ School/Church. May I help you?"

Read & Lead Caller: "Hello, may I please speak to Mr./Ms. _____?"

School/Church: "May I ask why you are calling?"

Read & Lead Caller: "Yes, I'm calling in regard to a letter I wrote Mr./Ms. _____ last week about conducting a Read & Lead™ Reading Improvement Program at _____ Elementary School (or _____ Church). I think he/she is expecting my call. May I talk to him/her now or may I set up an appointment to see him/her? Is there a better time for me to call?"





Telephone conversation with Principal or Church Pastor

Principal/Pastor: "Hello, this is Principal/Pastor _____ . May I help you?"

Read & Lead Volunteer: "Mr./Ms. _____, this is _____ (Name) _____ with _____ (School/Group) _____. Last week I wrote you a letter about conducting a Read & Lead™ Reading Improvement Program at your school/church/etc. We would like to volunteer to read to students that may have difficulty with reading. Do you recall receiving my letter?"

Principal/Pastor: "Yes, I received it yesterday."

Read & Lead Volunteer: "Great! The reason I'm calling is to set up an appointment to discuss the Read & Lead program with you. Could I come to your office on _____ at _____?"

Principal/Pastor: "Yes, of course."

Read & Lead Volunteer: "Great! I'll see you on _____ (date) _____ at _____ (time) _____. Perhaps you would like to have the librarian, person in charge of the extended day program or any interested teachers at the meeting. Thank you very much."

Personal Interview with Pastor, Principal and/or Other Educators

Principal/Pastor: "Welcome! How may I help you?"

Read & Lead Volunteer: "Mr./Ms. _____, my name is _____
and I am ____ (officer) _____ of the _____ (Club/Group) _____.

(Hand Principal/Pastor a copy of your brochure.)

Here is a brochure to which I/we responded in order to be involved in the Read & Lead™ program. Are you familiar with Read & Lead? Read & Lead is a non-profit organization started and run by concerned students who want to mentor your children in reading skills. With the emphasis on television today, reading skills are falling year after year. Through Read & Lead, we hope to turn the tide of reading.

Our purpose today is to see if you feel that your school/church has students that would benefit from a one-on-one reading relationship with an older student. I/We will donate one hour per week to read age appropriate books to the children you recommend. We do not teach reading because we are not trained to do so. But, educators tell us that the first step in a young child's learning to love books and reading is to be read to by an older person. That is the role we would like to serve.

Do you have children who would benefit from this type of one-on-one attention?

Do you have an extended day program (Sunday school, day care, etc.)?
Are there children who could meet us after school once a week?

****Usually the conversation takes off from here.**

Be familiar with this manual so you can answer most of the educator's questions.



READ & LEAD™

Reading Improvement Program



Dear Youth Leader:

You are invited to participate in an exciting new high school mentoring program to encourage young elementary students to know the joy of reading. This program was started by high school students and is called the "Read & Lead" Reading Improvement Program.

What is the problem? According to the National Institute on Literacy, twenty percent (20%) of all adults are virtually illiterate ... and the number is growing at an alarming rate. This does not bode well because these illiterate adults cannot read to their children. Educators tell us that reading to children is the first and most important step in learning to read. Retired General Norman Schwarzkopf summed up the importance of reading to children when he said, "I personally believe there is no better way to prepare children for the future than by reading to them. Start while they are young. Begin with children's books."

What is the cause of the problem? Because our society relies more and more on television for entertainment, news and information, reading is not deemed as important as it once was, even among educated people. A democracy depends on citizens who are independent thinkers, not robots who learn only what a television personality deems important to tell them.

How can you help? By volunteering one hour per week or every other week to read age appropriate books to children, you and your friends can help stem the tide of illiteracy in your community.

How do we get started? This manual gives you a step-by-step process for your Key Club to start a Read & Lead Reading Improvement Program in your community. Don't worry about getting a lot of people involved. If necessary, start with one or two people. More concerned teenagers will participate later as they see your success.

I look forward to hearing your progress with your Read & Lead Reading Improvement Program. Contact me if you have a problem or just some good news to share.

Pettus Randall
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